



The Barrett Farm and the Start of the American Revolution:

Source Analysis

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Enduring Understanding:

Written history is the interpretation of primary and secondary sources and is connected to the author's time and individual bias, therefore different histories of an event can greatly.

Essential Questions:

1. How is history created?
2. Are all historical sources reliable?
3. How did the American colonists contribute to the coming of the revolution?

Content and Skill Objectives/Outcomes:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to...

1. Explain and evaluate the role of Colonel James Barrett on April 19, 1775.
2. Analyze primary sources and cite specific examples from them to create a narrative about a historical event.
3. Evaluate the credibility of secondary sources about the Colonel James Barrett farm on April 19, 1775.



Number of Days: 1-2

Intended Grade Level: 8-12

Resource Materials:

Primary Source Documents

- Excerpts from the proceedings of the Committee of Safety and Supplies
- Draft of General Gage's orders to Lt. Colonel Francis Smith
- General Gage's orders to Lt. Col. Francis Smith
- Pictures of the restored Colonel James Barrett Farm
- Excerpt from Ensign DeBerniere's account report to General Gage
- Deposition of Colonel James Barrett

Secondary Source Documents

- Ezra Ripley, A History of the Fight at Concord (Concord: Allen & Atwill, 1827)
- Lemuel Shattuck, History of Concord (Boston & Concord: Russel & Co., 1835)
- Margaret Sidney, Old Concord Her Highways and Byways (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Co., 1890)

Required background information:

- Events leading up to April 19, 1775
- Primary vs. secondary sources

Teaching/Learning Sequence:

Introduction (Launch):

April 19, 1775 is undoubtedly one of the most important days in American history, but how do we know what happened that day almost two hundred and forty years ago? Historians use primary sources as a clue to determine what happened in the past. Many of the events leading up to and on April 19, 1775 in Concord relate to town resident Colonel James Barrett. Using primary sources your students will become historians and answer the question, "What was Colonel James Barrett's role on April 19, 1775?"

Exploration:

Background information on Colonel James Barrett: On April 19, 1775, Colonel James Barrett was 64 years old. As a younger man he fought in the French and Indian War as a militia captain. He was a selectman in the town of Concord and delegate to the Massachusetts General Court before the relationship between Great Britain and the American colonists turned sour. James Barrett even supplied the British troops stationed in Boston with produce from his farm between 1768-1774. After the Intolerable Acts essentially ended self-government in Massachusetts, James Barrett served as a delegate to the illegal Provincial Congress. The Provincial Congress began the work of military preparations and made James Barrett a colonel of the Middlesex militia in October 1774.



Break students into groups of approximately four students. Give students the primary sources at the end of this document. Tell the students that they must use the primary sources, just like historians do, to figure out what happened on April 19, 1775 and specifically to answer the question, “What was Colonel James Barrett’s role on April 19, 1775?” Each of the primary sources has clarifying questions at the end to help guide the students in their interpretation of the source. Also, please suggest to students that they use the following questions as a guide to determine Colonel Barrett’s role.

1. What did Colonel Barrett do before April 19, 1775?
2. What did Colonel Barrett do on April 19, 1775?
3. What happened on Colonel Barrett’s farm before April 19, 1775?
4. What happened on Colonel Barrett’s farm on April 19, 1775?

Have the students write or bullet point a short narrative answering the main question, “What was Colonel Barrett’s role on April 19, 1775?” when they are done analyzing the sources. Remind students that their narrative should include specific example from the sources. When students are complete, have them share their narratives with the class and consider the following questions.

1. Are all of the narratives the same?
2. Did different groups interpret the sources uniquely from other groups?
3. What information is missing from the sources that would help us write the narrative?
4. Do we think that these sources are reliable? Why or why not?
5. Are we as a class confident that our narratives are what actually happened on April 19, 1775? Why or why not?

Tell students that these are the same challenges that historians must face when analyzing sources and creating the histories that we read.

Explain to students that sometimes what we believe is historical fact is not based on primary sources from the time of the event. Often times, stories emerge decades after the event that are passed through families. Stories like these emerged in the 19th century about Colonel James Barrett and his farm; should we believe them?

Ask students to read the following secondary source accounts related to the events of April 19, 1775 and Colonel James Barrett and consider the following questions for each.

1. Do you believe this is a credible account? Why or why not?
2. What information from the previous activity did you use to make this assessment?

After reading the sources and answering the above questions, discuss the sources on the whole as a group and consider the following questions.

1. What information does all of the sources include? Does this make it true?
2. How does the content of the sources change over time?
3. Why do you think authors included some information while leaving other information out?

**Summary:**

Reinforce to students that the histories that they read in books and see in documentaries is a historian's interpretation of primary and secondary sources regarding the event. Students need to be critical of all historical sources and can create their own histories by exploring and interpreting sources on their own.

Assessment:

Ask students to write a piece evaluating the role of Colonel James Barrett on April 19, 1775 on using the primary and secondary sources. Was Colonel James Barrett important to the events of the day? Did his actions greatly affect the outcome of the day? Should he be considered a central figure to the day or was he just a regular guy? Be sure to have students cite specific evidence from the primary and secondary sources to support their opinion.

Frameworks/Common Core Standards:Common Core Literacy in History/Social Science Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework*Concepts and Skills, 8-12 History and Geography*

8. Interpret the past within its own historical context rather than in terms of present-day norms and values. (H, E, C)

10. Distinguish historical fact from opinion. (H, E, C)

U.S. History I Learning Standards

US1.4. Analyze how Americans resisted British before 1775 and analyze the reasons for the American victory and the British Defeat during the Revolutionary War.

US1.5-C. Explain the role of Massachusetts in the Revolution, including important events that took place in Massachusetts and important leaders from Massachusetts. . .The Battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill.



Primary Source: Excerpts from the proceedings of the Committee of Safety and Supplies

FEBRUARY 13, 1775.

At a meeting of the committee of safety and the committee of supplies, at Capt. Stedman's, at Cambridge, on Monday, February 13, 1775:

Present—Hon. John Hancock, Mr. Palmer, Deacon Fisher, Capt. White, Mr. Watson, Col. Heath, Mr. Devens, of the *committee of safety*: Col. Lincoln, Mr. Gill, Elbridge Gerry, of the *committee of supplies*:

Voted, That the committee of supplies be desired to purchase all the powder they can, upon the best terms they can.

Voted, That Capt. White and Col. Lincoln, be a committee to wait on Col. Robinson, and receive from him the four brass field pieces, and three brass mortars, now in his hands, the property of the province, and as soon as may be, remove them to the town of Concord,

(1) The records of this meeting, and of that held February 13, are subscribed by Richard Devens, as clerk *pro tempore*.

and they are to inform him that the committee agree, in case of a rupture with the troops, that the said field pieces shall be for the use of the artillery companies in Boston and Dorchester, and if matters are settled without, said field pieces are to be returned to said Robinson.

MARCH 14, 1775.

At a meeting of the committees of safety and supplies, at the house of Capt. Stedman, Tuesday, 14th March, 1775:

Present—Hon. John Hancock, Col. Heath, Capt. White, Col. Palmer, Mr. Devens, Col. Orne, Mr. Watson, Mr. Pigeon, Hon. Thomas Cushing and Mr. Samuel Adams, *committee of safety*: Deacon Cheever, Mr. Gerry and Mr. Gill, *committee of supplies*:

Voted, That watches be kept constantly at places where the provincial magazines are kept, and that the clerk write on the subject to Col. Barrett of Concord, Henry Gardner, Esq. of Stow, and Capt. Timothy Bigelow of Worcester, leaving it to them how many the watches shall consist of.

Voted, That the members on these committees, belonging to the towns of Charlestown, Cambridge and Roxbury, be desired, at the province expense, to procure at least two men for a watch every night, to be placed in each of those towns, and that said members be in readiness to send couriers forward to the towns where the magazines are placed, when sallies are made from the army by night.¹

Voted, That the committees adjourn to [meet on] the 22d of this month, at Concord.



MARCH 23, 1775.

At a meeting of the committees of safety and supplies, at the house of Mr. Taylor, at Concord, the 23d March, 1775 :

Present—Hon. John Hancock, Esq., Col. Orne, Col. Heath, Capt. White, Deacon Palmer, Mr. Watson, Mr. Devens, Mr. Pigeon, *committee of safety* : Deacon Cheever, Col. Lincoln, Col. Lee, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Gill, *committee of supplies* :

Voted, That a ton of musket bullets now arrived at Concord, be there lodged with Col. Barrett.²

APRIL 17, 1775.

At a meeting of the committees of safety and supplies, at Mr. Taylor's house, in Concord, on Monday, April 17, 1775 :

Present—Hon. John Hancock, Esq., Col. Heath, Col. Palmer, Capt. White, Mr. Devens, Col. Gardner, Mr. Watson, Col. Orne and J. Pigeon, *committee of safety* : Col. Lee, Mr. Gill, Mr. Cheever, Mr. Gerry and Col. Lincoln. *committee of supplies* :

Voted, unanimously, that application be made to Capt. Hatch, for captain of the artillery company for Boston, and if he refuses, to offer it to Mr. Crafts, and so on in order as they stand in the company ; also, that Capt. Robinson of Dorchester be applied to as captain of the company of Dorchester ; and that Mr. Newhall of Charlestown be applied to ; that the captain for the Marblehead company be not appointed until the Marblehead members make inquiry and report ; that Capt. Timothy Bigelow be applied to as captain of the Worcester company ; that Mr. Thomas Wait Foster of Hadley, be applied to as captain of the company at Hadley.

Voted, That two four pounders, now at Concord, be mounted by the committee of supplies, and that Col. Barrett be desired to raise an artillery company, to join the army when raised, they to have no pay until they join the army ; and also that an instructor for the use of the cannon be appointed, to be put directly in pay.

Voted, unanimously, that six pounds, lawful money, a month, be a captain's pay in an artillery company, that the first and second lieutenant have four pounds, the lieutenant of fireworks to have three pounds, five shillings, that the sergeants have forty-two shillings per month ; the corporals thirty-eight shillings per month, the common men thirty-six shillings per month, the drummers and fifers thirty-eight shillings per month ; also, that four shillings per week be allowed for their board.



APRIL 18, 1775.

Voted, That the vote of the fourteenth instant, relating to the powder being removed from Leicester to Concord, be reconsidered, and, that the clerk be directed to write to Col. Barrett, accordingly, and to desire he would not proceed in making it up in cartridges.

Voted, That one half of the musket cartridges be removed from Stow to Groton.

Voted, That the muskets balls under the care of Col. Barrett, be buried under ground, in some safe place, that he be desired to do it, and to let the commissary only be informed thereof.

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

What is the Committee of Safety and Supplies asking to be done in Concord?

Who is put in charge of the supplies in Concord?

What is Colonel James Barrett asked to do by the Committee of Safety and Supplies?



Military stockpiles (facsimile) at the Colonel James Barrett House



Primary Source: List of Supplies Under the Supervision of Colonel James Barrett

An account of all the Province Stores Sent to Col James Barretts of Concord Partly in His Own Custody & Partly Elsewhere all under his Care.

Two pieces of Cannon Brought From Watertown to ye Towns
Eight Pieces of Cannon Brought to ye Town by Mr Harrington
Four Pieces of Brass Cannon & Two Mortar from Col Robertsons.
Received of Mr Daniel Cheever Fifteen boxes of cartridges & Ball and Two of Paper.
Likewise received of Mr Daniel Cheever Two Barrels of Musquit ball containing 2100 weight
Received a load by Mr Welch from Mr Daniel Cheever
Received a load of ball & cartridge Paper by Mr S____ Thomas Mr Daniel Cheever
Received a Load by Mr Welch from Mr Daniel Cheever said to be 2900 of ball
Received a load by Mr Welch from Mr Daniel Cheever of Ball.
Received a load of ball from Mr Daniel Cheever delivered at the town said to contain 2000.
Received a load three hoghead with pick axes & spades & flints from Mr Daniel Cheevers stored at Capt Ethan Jones.
Received a load of Med____ & Chest form Mr Cheevers stored at Joshua Bonds.
Received a load from Mr Cheevers & Firsis of spades and axes 12 boxes of Carrd at Willoughby Prescott.
Rec'd of Mr Cheever 2hh Flints & Shott of _____ for 24 _____ att Leit Barretts
REc'd of Mr Cheevers 2 chest of Medicines 10 Boxes of Comm_____ att Barrett & Prescott
Rec'd of Col Lee of Marblehead ____ hoghead said to contain thirty five half barrels of powder.
Six of the said casks at Col Barretts Five at James Chandlers & six at James Barrett Junrs Six at Ephriam Woods Six at Joseph Hosmers & Six at Jonas Heywood.
Received a load from Col Lee by John Wilson part stolen at Neveis the load was part tents & poles & Hatchetts stored at Abijah Browns.
Two horse carts with tents by Cutter & Wilson from Mr Gill said to be 100 tents stored at Cap Thomas Hubbards.
Two Load of axes and pick axes & hatchetts by Gardner _____ Mr Gills Stored at Ephriam Whyler.
Received a load from Mr Gill by Gardner of Pick axes & spades & hatchetts stored at Willoughby Prescott
Received a load from Mr Cheevers medicine chest stored at Town House.
Received of Mr Gill on hoghead of spoons
Received of Mr Cheever a hoghead of wodden ware 1 hh of matching & tent cord & _____ & ball stored at Willoughby Prescott.
REced of Mr Gill 6 hh of Dishes stored at Capt Thomas Hubbards.
Recd of Mr Gill 10 Ox team & 1 House team of Cont____ stored at Ephriam Potter by Godard.
Received one horse load from Mr Gill of tents 40 stored at Thomas Hubbar, 20 Bashels
Received of Mr Daniel Cheevers providing Four Barrels of Oatmeal containing 20 Bushels
Stored at Col Barrett.



CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

Can it be inferred from this source what supplies are at Colonel Barrett's farm?
Other than the Barrett Farm, where else are supplies be store in Concord?

Primary Source: Excerpt of draft of General Gage's Orders to Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith

A quantity of ammunition and provision together as number of cannon and small arms having been collected at Concord for the avowed purpose of raiding rebellion against His Majesty Government.

Sir, you will march with the Corps of Grenadiers and Light Infantry put under your command with the utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord, and where you will seize and Provisions, Tents, and all other military stores destroy all the Artillery and Ammunition ^ you can find, you will knock off the trunion at and destroy the carriages least of each of the iron guns ^ and beat in the muzzles of the brass ones so as to render them useless. & flour and the tents burnt.

The powder ^ may be shaken out of the barrels into the water ^ and the men may put the balls and lead into their knapsacks, throwing them away by degrees into the Fields Ditches Ponds &c. ~~When you shall I give you~~ ^ have a plan on which is marked of the Places where the artillery& ammunition is reported to be lodged, and after destroying the same you will return, and if your men appear much fatigued you may halt them at Lexington or Cambridge and let them rest in barns or other outhouses, and may get waggons at Lexington for weak and fatigued men. If any body of men dares to ~~attack~~ oppose you with arms you will warn them to disperse~~and~~ or attack them.

Some men from the Artillery are ordered to attend you and will carry sledge hammers and other instruments to destroy the guns.

Four Brass Cannon and two Mortars or Cohorns with a Number of small arms in the cellar or our Houses of Mr. Barrett a little on the other side of the Bridge where is also lodged a Quantity of Powder & Lead. . .

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

Why does General Gage believed the colonists have been collecting weapons?
What should the British soldiers do if the colonists attempt to oppose them?
What does General Gage believe is at Colonel Barrett's farm?



Primary Source: Order Given to Lt. Colonel Francis Smith from Thomas Gage

Lieut. Colonel Smith, 10th Regiment Foot
Sir:

Having received intelligence, that a quantity of Ammunition, Provision, Artillery, Tents and small arms, have been collected at Concord, for the Avowed Purpose of raising and supporting a Rebellion against His Majesty, you will March with the Corps of Grenadiers and Light Infantry, put under your command, with the utmost expedition and Secrecy to Concord, where you will seize and destroy all artillery, Ammunition, Provisions, Tents, Small Arms, and all Military Stores whatever. But you will take care that the Soldiers do not plunder the inhabitants, or hurt private property.

You have a Draught of Concord, on which is marked the Houses, Barns, &c., which contain the above military Stores. You will order a Trunion to be knocked off each gun, but if its found impracticable on any, they must be spiked, and the carriages destroyed. The Powder and flower (flour) must be shook out of the Barrels into the River, the Tents burnt, Pork or Beef destroyed in the best way you can devise. And the men may put Balls of lead in their pockets, throwing them by degrees into Ponds, Ditches &c, but no Quantity together, so that they may be recovered afterwards.

If you meet any Brass Artillery, you will order their muzzles to be beat in so as to render them useless.

You will observe by the Draught that it will be necessary to secure the two bridges as soon as possible, you will therefore Order a party of the best marchers, to go on with expedition for the purpose.

A small party on Horseback is ordered out to stop all advice of your March getting to Concord before you, and a small number of Artillery go out in Chaises to wait for you on the road, with Sledge Hammers, Spikes, &c.

You will open your business and return with the Troops, as soon as possible, which I must leave to your own Judgment and Discretion.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant
Thos. Gage.

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

What does General Gage order Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith to do?

What does General Gage want to ensure that the soldiers do not do while in Concord?

What does General Gage want Lt. Col. Smith to do upon his immediate arrival to Concord?



Primary Source: Excerpt from Ensign DeBerniere's account report to General Thomas Gage on April 19, 1775

...Capt. Parsons of the 10th, was dispatched with six light companies to take possession of a bridge that lay three quarters of a mile from Concord, and I was ordered to shew him the road there, and also conduct him to a house where there was some cannon and other stores hid; when we arrived at the bridge, three companies under the command of Capt. Lowry of the 43rd, were left to protect it, these three companies were not close together, but situated so as to be able to support each other; we then proceeded to Col. Barrett's where these stores were, we did not find so much as we expected, but what there was we destroyed; in the mean time Capt. Lowry and his party were attacked by about 1500 rebels and drove from the bridge, three officers were wounded and one killed, three soldiers were killed and a number wounded, notwithstanding they let Capt. Parsons with three companies return, and never attacked us...

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Why did Captain Parsons and three companies of soldiers cross the bridge?
What did the British soldiers find at the farm? What did they do with it?
What happened at the bridge?

Primary Source: Deposition of Colonel James Barrett

I, James Barrett of Concord, Colonel of a Regiment of Militia in the County of Middlesex, do testify and say, that on Wednesday morning last about daybreak I was informed of the approach of a number of the Regular Troops to the Town of Concord, where were some magazines belonging to this Province. When there was assembled some of the Militia of this the neighboring Towns, I ordered them to march to the North Bridge (so called) which they had passed and were taking up. I ordered said militia to march to said bridge and pass the same, but not to fire on the King's troops unless they were first fired upon. We advanced near said Bridge, when the said troops fired upon our militia and killed two men dead on the spot, and wounded several others, which was the first firing of guns in the town of Concord. My detachment then returned the fire, which killed and wounded several of the king's soldiers.

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

What orders did Colonel Barrett give to the militia?
Who fired first, the British soldiers or the militia?
What else could Colonel Barrett have told us to give us a better idea of his actions that day?



Secondary Source: Excerpt from Ezra Ripley's A History of the Fight at Concord (1827)

In 1825, the town of Lexington took new depositions from ten surviving participants of April 19, 1775. These depositions were included in The Battle of Lexington by Elias Phinney. The main purpose of the work was to disprove Concord's claim that the first active resistance to the British soldiers was at the North Bridge and show what an important role the Lexington militia had in the events of the day. The town of Concord countered Phinney's work with A History of the Fight at Concord by Ezra Ripley. Ripley included four new depositions from surviving Concord participants in the battle and used them to prove the first true resistance of the day came in Concord.

The British troops, which went on to Col. Barrett's, found and burnt a number of carriages for cannon, and other implements of war. The soldiers were hungry and thirsty; and here, as at other places in town, when disbanded, they requested supplies. The officers very politely offered to pay Mrs. Barrett for victuals and drink, but she refused pay, saying, "we are commanded to feed our enemy, if he hunger." They assured her of good treatment, but said they must search her house and should destroy public stores. Mrs. Barrett had concealed the small articles that belong to cannon, with musket balls, flints, cutlasses, &c. in casks in the garrett, and had put over them a quantity of feathers which prevented discovery. On seeing a son of Col. Barrett, the officers demanded his name. Being answered, Barrett, they called him a rebel, and taking hold of him, said, "you must go to Boston with us." Mrs. Barrett spoke and said, "he is my son, and not the master of the house."— Upon this they released him. Another son was there, viz. the late James Barrett Esq., but being lame and inactive at that time, did not so much attract their attention. They were about to burn the devoted articles, carriages, &c. so near the barn as to endanger it. Observing this, Mrs. Barrett went out to them, and reminded the officers of their promise not to injure private property. They promptly ordered the articles to be carried into the street, where they were consumed.



Secondary Source: Except from Lemuel Shattuck's History of Concord (1835)

Excerpt is based on an interview done by Shattuck with Mary Prescott Barrett in 1831. She married Col. Barrett's son Peter and was not present at the farm on April 19, 1775.

After Colonel Barrett had ordered the militia to march over the bridge, he rode home to give some directions respecting the stores at his house. He set out on his return to the militia companies just before the party of British troops arrived. They said to Mrs. Barrett, "Our orders are to search your house and your brother's from top to bottom." Leave was granted. The soldiers here, as at other places in town, requested and were provided with refreshments. One of the sergeants asked for spirit, but it was refused; and the commanding officer forbid it, as it might render him unfit for duty, saying, "We shall have bloody work to day, — we have killed men at Lexington." The officers offered to pay Mrs. Barrett, but she refused, saying, "We are commanded to feed our enemies." They then threw some money into her lap. Hesitating some time, she accepted it with the remark, — "This is the price of blood." They assured her of good treatment, but said they must execute their orders. Mrs. Barrett had concealed some musket-balls, cartridges, flints, &c., in casks in the garret, and had put over them a quantity of feathers, which prevented discovery. They however took fifty dollars in money from one of the rooms. On seeing Stephen, a son of Colonel Barrett, the officer demanded his name. Being answered "Barrett," they called him a rebel, and taking hold of him said, "You must go to Boston with us, and be sent to England for your trial." Upon Mrs. Barret saying, "He is my son, and not the master of the house," they released him. They collected some gun-carriages in order to burn them; but before they executed their intention the firing at the bridge was heard, and they immediately retreated.



Secondary Source: Excerpt from Old Concord - Her Highways and Byways by Margaret Sidney (1890)

"Do let us see the 'Muster Room,'*" we cry, "and tell us the story there," for this is the Colonel James Barrett house, and we have come for the record of the old homestead during the activities of the eventful nineteenth of April, 1775.

With the directness of a child, and the quick utterance of one who knows her story well, and enjoys telling it, Miss A. ushers us in, and offers for our acceptance high-backed rockers, but we hasten to the delightful window-niches, and very soon we are no longer living in to-day, but a past century claims us.

Colonel James Barrett, her great-grandfather (whose father lived before him in this old house), was born in 1710. He went through the French

*The "Muster Room" is the lower front room as seen in the accompanying view of the house. It has two front windows and one on the side. The age of the house is not known. It has always been in the possession of the Barrett family.

War, to come out with impaired health. In the threatening times preceding the historic nineteenth, the important duty of buying the provincial stores was entrusted to him; he kept a portion of them carefully under his personal supervision. He held also the responsibility of examining the soldiers and of enlisting them. This work was always done in the room in which we were sitting. Hence its name—the "Muster Room." (There is a curious hole, shaped like a three-leaved clover, over the door; Miss A. pauses in her description, to tell us that her father said it was cut there when the house was built—for what purpose, other than ventilation, the visitor cannot imagine.)

When the British soldiers (a detachment under Captain Parsons being sent to the Barrett house for the stores, and to take Colonel James) were heard coming, the old mother of the Colonel was alone in the house. The family had urged her to flee to a place of safety, but the plucky old lady said, "No, I can't live very long anyway, and I rather stay and see that they don't burn down the house and barn."

One of the descendants of the Colonel gives it as his opinion that probably two companies were

sent to the house—about one hundred and fifty men. (Shattuck's History states three companies.)

Captain Parsons stepped up, "Madam, I have orders to search your house."

"You won't destroy private property?" asked the old lady, not flinching.



SITE OF THE OLD HOUSE, WHERE THE BRITISH SOLDIERS DRANK FROM THE WELL, AND "TORY BLISS" WAS SEEN.

"No; we will not destroy private property, but we shall take anything and everything we find that can be made into ammunition, or any stores, and our orders are to take Colonel James Barrett."

Early in the morning, when the first news of trouble to come, was heard, the men in the Barrett family ploughed up the land south of the old barn, in what is now the kitchen garden, a space of about thirty feet square, and while one led the oxen, the others followed and dropped into the furrow the muskets that were stored in the house—then went back and turned the earth over them, thus concealing them. They carried the musket balls into the attic and threw them into an empty barrel; near by was another barrel about three quarters full of feathers; these they turned over the balls. When searching the house, a soldier, spying the barrel, thought he had a prize, and thrust his hand into the feathers, stirring them up. An officer exclaimed crossly, "You fool you! What do you expect to find there!" Jeers instead of commendation being the soldier's lot, he stopped short in his investigations, and our forefathers had cause to bless that laugh of the Briton.



There was a little trunk holding some pewter plates, very near the barrel. A soldier seized one end of this, lifted it and cried out, "This is heavy," preparing to break it in. The Colonel's old mother said immediately, "This is private property; it belongs to a maiden lady in the family"—so according to the promise fortunately secured from the commander, it remained undisturbed.

On the first alarm, the Colonel's son Stephen (who, the family record in the old Bible tells us, was born in 1750) was sent to Price Place (the cross roads where four roads meet, now called Prison Station) to tell the minute men who were hurrying from Stow and Harvard, and the vicinity, not to go down the road by the Barrett House, but to take the great road into town to the North Bridge. How long he waited at his post, tradition saith not, but when he came back he passed around the house and entered the kitchen door. A British officer met him as his foot crossed the threshold, laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, and said, "I have orders to take you in irons to England."

His quick-witted grandmother started up and cried: "No, this is my grandson. This is not Colonel James Barrett; you may take him if you can find him."

The soldiers, hungry and defiant, asked the old lady for something to eat. She, with manner as kindly as if ministering to the necessities of friends, brought out pans of milk and set before them, accompanied by sweet loaves of brown bread, saying, "We are commanded in the Bible to feed our enemies." After they had eaten the bread and milk, one soldier offered her money. She refused with dignity, saying, "It is the price of blood." He then threw it into her lap.

The old barn that was then standing, was about forty feet distant from the house. The lane was the same as the present driveway, which is quite close to the homestead. The soldiers were going to burn the gun carriages there (the best ones had been saved by carrying them to Spruce gutter), but the old lady begged them not to do so, for she feared they would set fire to the barn. Her pluck had conquered their respect, and her kindness had made them gentle; and they drew them to the side of the corn barn, a small building about ten feet square, nearer to the road, and close to the lane. Here they had their conflagration to suit themselves.

And now Miss A.'s voice held a tremor of tender sentiment as she related the story of the pretty daughter of the house of Barrett. Millicent was the granddaughter of Colonel James, the daughter of his son James who married and settled in the next house toward Price Place. Milly, being young and pretty, it must be acknowledged, had learned how to coquette, and, so the story goes, had captivated, while on a visit to relatives in Cambridge, the hearts of some British soldiers whom she met in the cotillion and minuet, the dances of the day, especially fascinating one of the officers.

She used to tease him, woman-like, to tell her how they managed their military affairs, and how they made their cartridges.

He, man-like, told her the manner in which they made cartridges, adding if they should find out in England that he had given her the secret, he would, on his return, lose his head. (But it seems he had already lost that!)

After the eventful nineteenth of April, she came home to her father's house and, woman-like again, at once proceeded to put her knowledge into good results. She gathered all her mates about her, and told them the secret; and busily the young fingers flew, forming after the directions given by her British swain, the cartridges that were to save her brave countrymen. The scissors that she used were in the Old South Meeting House, but have been given to the Concord Library by a cousin of the heroine.



The "Muster Room" at the Colonel James Barrett Farmhouse – Minute Man National Historical Park



The Barrett Farmhouse Today: A Victory for Historic Preservation



The Colonel James Barrett Farm is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as one of the most important Revolutionary War landmarks of national significance. Colonel James Barrett, a member of the Provincial Congress, was the overall commander at the North Bridge on the first day of the American Revolution. He was also in charge of all the military supplies in the area. When 700 British Regulars marched to Concord on April 19, 1775, they were intent on seizing weapons and other military supplies stored throughout the town, including Colonel Barrett's property.

Thanks to the efforts of **Save Our Heritage**, a private organization devoted to historic preservation, the Barrett House was purchased from the McGrath family and carefully restored to its colonial appearance. Then in 2009, The United States Congress voted to expand the boundaries of Minute Man National Historical Park to include the Col. James Barrett House and land.

In 2012 Congress appropriated the funds needed for the National Park Service to acquire Barrett House and the surrounding land. "We're delighted to finally have the Col. James Barrett House incorporated into Minute Man National Historical Park," said Superintendent Nancy Nelson. "Barrett Farm completes the narrative of the beginning of the American Revolution within the park."

For more information about Minute Man National Historical Park, visit our website at www.nps.gov/mima